

statewide and indeed nationwide impact our civil legal system has on our daily lives.

The cost of lawsuit abuse includes higher costs for consumer products, higher medical expenses, higher taxes, higher insurance rates, and lost business expansion and product development, a serious problem in the United States of America.

I worked hard to reform our legal system at the State level during my days as a member of the Maryland General Assembly. During my tenure in Congress, I have supported efforts with respect to product liability reform, securities litigation reform, and reform of our Federal Superfund program.

More specifically, Mr. Speaker, as a member of the House Committee on Banking and Financial Services during the 105th Congress, I sponsored bipartisan legislation that has helped reduce frivolous class-action lawsuits brought against small-business people employed as mortgage brokers.

Mr. Speaker, legal reform is a complex issue, as we have seen actually today on the floor of this House and in the past 5 years from the 104th Congress and the 105th Congress, as well. The legal system must function to provide justice to every American.

When our open access to the courts is abused or used to the detriment of innocent parties who happen to have money or happen to have insurance coverage, this system must be reviewed and reformed, sometimes in State legislatures, sometimes on this floor.

Let me acknowledge the board of the Baltimore Regional Citizens Against Lawsuit Abuse for giving of their valuable time and energy: The Honorable Phillip D. Bissett, Vicki L. Almond, Joseph Brown, Dr. William Howard, Sheryl Davis-Kohl, Gary O. Prince, and the Honorable Joseph Sachs.

Mr. Speaker, the Baltimore Regional Citizens Against Lawsuit Abuse has declared September 19-25 as Lawsuit Abuse Awareness Week in Maryland.

I want to commend these citizens and all involved in this worthwhile effort, for their dedication and commitment, and to acknowledge this week as a time of public awareness regarding the serious issues associated with abuse of our civic legal system.

#### EUROPEAN UNION SHOULD WITHDRAW UNFAIR, DISCRIMINATORY REGULATION RESTRICTING HUSH-KITTED AND REENGINEED AIRCRAFT

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. LIPINSKI) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. LIPINSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise tonight to join my colleagues, the gentleman from Pennsylvania (Chairman SHUSTER) the gentleman from Tennessee (Chairman DUNCAN) and the gen-

tleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR), the ranking member, in supporting a resolution expressing the sense of Congress that the administration should act swift and decisively if the European Union does not withdraw its unfair, discriminatory regulation restricting hush-kitted and reengineed aircraft.

In particular, the resolution strongly urges the administration to file an Article 84 complaint with the International Civil Aviation Authority, ICAO, so that it can be objectively determined whether the EU regulation violates international standards.

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On April 29, 1999, the European Council of Ministers adopted a resolution that will in effect ban the operation of former State 2 aircraft that has been modified either with hushkits or new engines to meet the Stage 3 international noise standards. The Europeans claim that the hushkit regulation is needed to provide noise relief to residents living around airports in crowded European cities. However, the European Union has not provided any technical evidence that would demonstrate and improve noise or emissions climate around airports as a result of this rule.

This is not an environmental regulation, as the Europeans suggest. Rather, this re-regulation is an unfair unilateral action that discriminates against U.S. products and severely undermines international noise standards set by ICAO. By unilaterally establishing a new regional standard for noise, the EU is taking local control over an international issue. In addition, the EU has done this in such a way that the regulation most adversely impacts U.S. carriers, U.S. products and U.S. manufacturers.

The House of Representatives has already expressed its strong opposition to this misguided regulation by passing H.R. 661, the bill introduced by my good friend and colleague, the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. OBERSTAR), which would ban the operation of the Concorde in the U.S.A. Passage of H.R. 661, I believe, showed the Europeans that the United States is serious about protecting U.S. aviation interests against unfair unilateral trade actions. As a result, the effective date of the EU regulation was postponed until May 2000 in an attempt to accommodate the concerns of the United States.

Yet although the implementation date was delayed for a year, the regulation was adopted and is now law. As a result, the regulation is already having a negative economic impact on U.S. aviation. The regulation has raised serious doubts about the future market for hushkitted and re-engineed aircraft, which in turn has already lessened the value of these aircraft and has put a halt to new hushkit orders. This is why

the EU regulation must be completely withdrawn.

My understanding is that the European Parliament will not consider withdrawing the regulation until significant progress is made on Stage 4, the next generation noise standard. The U.S. is already working with the EU through ICAO on defining and implementing a Stage 4 noise standard. Let me state for the RECORD that the United States is fully committed to the development of a Stage 4 noise standard, however it is difficult to move forward towards a new noise standard while the EU hushkit regulation is still on the books. With its hushkit regulation the EU ignores its priority agreements with ICAO and has developed its own regional restrictions. Given this, it will be nearly impossible to convince the 185 countries of ICAO to agree to a new noise requirement on aircraft. Why would any carrier in any country want to invest in Stage 4 aircraft if any country in the world can also impose its own restrictions on aircraft? It simply does not make sense.

Nevertheless the U.S. is working patiently with the Europeans on developing a Stage 4 noise standard. However, the ongoing discussions and negotiations could continue for weeks, if not months. Yet each day that the EU hushkit regulation remain on the books costs the U.S. aviation industry more money.

For this reason the U.S. must challenge the EU regulation in an international forum. The United States must send a clear signal that it will not allow Europe to set international standards on its own. In particular, the U.S. Government should use the Article 84 process provided by the Chicago convention to resolve disputes between two or more States. The U.S. should file an Article 84 complaint at ICAO asking the international organization to determine whether the EU hushkit regulation violates its standards. This would demonstrate how serious the U.S. considers the issue. It would also show the EU that the United States has the support of the rest of the world on this very important aviation issue.

#### IN SUPPORT OF A MINIMUM WAGE INCREASE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Nevada (Ms. BERKLEY) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Ms. BERKLEY. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to voice my strong support for an increase in America's minimum wage. The current minimum wage pays \$10,712 a year for full-time work. That is not even enough to lift a family of three above the poverty line.

America needs families earning a decent living, wages good enough to afford a home and a car and a quality education for our children. That is how we grow the American economy.